

12 High Ridge Drive
Pawcatuck, CT 06379
28 February 2021

RE: HB 6517

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Paul Narducci and I reside in Pawcatuck CT. I am writing to express my support House Bill 6517.

As a means of background, two of my three children have been diagnosed with dyslexia and learning processing disorders. Unfortunately, but for the persistent hard work of my wife, I believe that their conditions would have gone undiagnosed. As it is, both of their conditions were not recognized until relatively late in their educational journey.

S., my oldest daughter, attended a local parochial school through 8th grade. Despite reading difficulties, she was able to adapt at school. My wife and I, however, noticed increasing problems with her school work. My wife advocated long and hard to get S. the appropriate testing and accommodations, and after several years, the Stonington school system finally provided the needed aid, prior to sixth grade. She graduated Stonington High School with honors and now is a senior at the University of Connecticut in its Business School. But for my wife's dogged determination, I am confident that my daughter's condition would not have been properly recognized, nor would it have been addressed. Despite S.'s accomplishments, she still has difficulty reading a restaurant menu.

This pattern, unfortunately, repeated itself with my son, M., our youngest. M. was in parochial school in grades K through 3, and then transferred to a local public elementary school (West Broad Street School). Seeing similar learning issues with M., we continually brought the subject up to his elementary and middle school teachers, guidance counselors and the special services providers at Pawcatuck Middle School and Mystic Middle School. Because M. had also been diagnosed with ADHD, his problems were attributed to his attention disorder and his problems learning were dismissed as "behavioral". We had M. undergo neuro-psych testing at our own expense and called the results to the attention of appropriate persons. It was not until the end of his 8th grade year that the school system acknowledged his learning disorders, but the damage had already been done. Because Stonington was not equipped to address these disorders at this late stage, we were required to send M. to a boarding school in Massachusetts that specialized in dyslexia and other learning processing disorders. Moreover, the indirect

consequences of the system's failure to address my son's situation – low self-esteem, lack of confidence and being the object of bullying – exacerbated an already intolerable situation. The bullying not only came from fellow students, but also from some of his teachers who did not recognize or understand his profound frustrations that resulted from his difficulties in learning. Rather than being able to express what he did not know, he would mask his problems, and his teachers would dismiss and even mock him, which compounded his feelings of inadequacy. To this day, M. hates school and all that is associated with it.

I truly believe that had his teachers and counselors – and the system itself - had a better understanding of dyslexia and structured learning, many of the difficulties suffered by both S. and M. could have been avoided or at least been reduced. It is imperative that teachers be required to develop the knowledge and skill to recognize students' needs in these areas of literacy and literacy preparation. While I recognize that such requirements will not help M. or S., I can only hope that this legislation addressing the implementation, compliance and accountability surrounding dyslexia and structured literacy will prevent other children from having to experience what my children have.

Accordingly, I wholeheartedly support the passage of HB 6517.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Narducci